

## STATE INITIATIVES

### National Register of Historic Places Listings

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#### *Public School Buildings of Washington, DC, 1862-1960 Multiple Property Submission*

The major historical theme that runs throughout the history of the District of Columbia's public schools is the maintenance of a dual school system. This practice ended in 1954 when the Supreme Court of the United States outlawed segregated educational facilities. Many District residents recall their attendance at a racially segregated school. Former African-American schools are regarded today both as a source of pride and as a reminder of

past injustices. Below are some public school buildings in Washington DC, recently listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

**The Alexander Crummell School**, built in 1910-1911, is dedicated to and memorializes the life and work of clergyman, teacher, missionary, and orator Alexander Crummell (1818-1898) who planned the strategy for the abolition of slavery with Frederick Douglass, and after that goal was achieved, devoted his life to the moral and intellectual betterment and solidarity of African Americans. The Crummell School, located at Kendall and Gallaudet Streets, N.E., was one of the first buildings designed by Snowden Ashford when he was appointed in 1909 as the first Municipal Architect of the District of Columbia. Previously there was a girls' boarding school at the site and still visible is the word "Boys" chiseled in

the northeast portico frieze near the entrance, a reminder of the administration's attempt to separate the sexes.

Although the influential Ivy City Citizens Association, incorporated in 1911, attempted with some success to bring improvements to the school, the Crummell Elementary School was eventually closed and transferred to the D.C. Department of General Services in 1977. The school was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 25, 2003.

**The William Syphax School** memorializes the life and work of William Syphax, a prominent African American who worked tirelessly until his death in 1894 to create a public school system in the District with equal educational opportunities for African Americans. The Syphax School, located at 1360 Half Street, S.W., was constructed in 1909-10. It was designed in 1900 by noted Washington architectural firm Marsh & Peter in a Colonial revival style. Plans are underway to restore the Syphax School as a community center. The William Syphax School was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 25, 2003.

Constructed in 1912 on the site of one of the city's first public schools built for freedmen, the Military Road School retains its historical connection with the struggle by African Americans to secure the benefits of public education. The outline of the original schoolhouse, built during the Civil War when African-American refugees sought protection under the watch of the Union

*The Crummell School is an example of the high architectural standards associated with education in Washington, DC in the early 20th century. Photo courtesy of Tanya Edwards Beauchamp.*



military, is shown on the construction plans for the present building. For years the Military Road School served as the only school available to African-American students in a large area of Upper Northwest Washington, DC.

With public school desegregation, it was closed in 1954, and has been used for various public and education activities ever since. The Military Road School, located at 1375 Missouri Avenue, N.W., was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 25, 2003.

***Independent Order of  
Odd Fellows Temple  
Erie County, Ohio***

The Odd Fellows organization was founded in England during the 18th century as a social and benevolent fraternal organization for workingmen. By the middle of the 19th century, the order had chapters in other countries, including Germany and the United States. German-speaking Odd Fellows lodges began appearing in

communities with a high concentration of German immigrants, such as Sandusky, Ohio. German immigrants, attracted by the limestone quarries and other resources, arrived in 1840, and soon became the area's largest ethnic group. The Odd Fellows was an important "club" for men of German heritage.

The Ogontz Lodge No.66, International Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF), the oldest order in Sandusky, was founded in 1846 with a strong German membership. Two years later, the Erie Encampment No.27 IOOF was organized. During the 1850s-1860s these lodges met in several locations. In 1889, for \$35,000, the Odd Fellows Building was built on Washington Row. These buildings served as the IOOF permanent meeting place

for nearly a century. The building is also an important example of the work of the Feick family of builders, who were members. In his book *Sandusky Then & Now*, Ernst Von Schulenberg indicated that at the time the Odd Fellows Building was built, the IOOF was one of three German secret societies flourishing in Sandusky. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows Temple was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on May 1, 2003.

*William Syphax School represents the efforts of the city of Washington to provide quality educational facilities for African-American students. Photo courtesy of Tanya Edwards Beauchamp.*







*The 600 block of Hidalgo exemplifies the local architectural flavor of the Barrio Azteca in Laredo, TX. Photo courtesy of Terri Myers.*

***The Barrio Azteca Historic District  
Webb County, Texas***

The Barrio Azteca Historic District embraces all or part of a 53-block predominantly residential and small-scale commercial section of Laredo, Texas, consisting of 120 acres. When the land north of the Rio Grande was annexed by the United States in 1848, ranching communities consisted of a landed Mexican elite, independent *rancheros*, and a working class. Immigrants from the Mexican interior contributed to the growth of the community and provided much of the labor for the newly arrived international railroad (1881) and related industries.

By the turn of the century, El Ranchero was a thriving community of homes and small businesses populated almost exclusively by Mexican and Mexican American residents. The Mexican Revolution brought a tremendous influx of new immigrants and its numbers increased the population of El Ranchero/Barrio Azteca such that by 1920, it was a fully developed, densely populated

neighborhood with well-educated professionals and merchants who built businesses and established small private schools in the community.

The oldest extant properties in Barrio Azteca date from the mid-19th century and are typically one-story, flat-roofed two-room houses built in a linear plan and constructed of locally quarried stone plastered with stucco. Later, many fine examples of brick domestic, commercial, combined domestic/commercial and institutional buildings were built in Laredo. The 20th century reflects the rising popularity of more conventional Anglo-American architectural forms. Barrio Azteca was listed in the National Register on May 21, 2003.

***The Carver Theatre  
Richland County, South Carolina***

The Carver Theatre, at 1519 Harden Street in Columbia, South Carolina, is important to the history of Columbia's African-American community in the early-to-mid 20th century. It was built circa 1941, and was

one of only two exclusively African-American movie theaters in Columbia. The Carver Theatre is the only extant motion picture theater where African-Americans could freely attend. The Carver Theatre was adjacent to the Waverly community, the preeminent African-American neighborhood of professionals, physicians, nurses, educators, ministers, and skilled tradesmen in Columbia.

Members of the community have vivid recollections of the Carver Theatre. Not only were movies shown there, but also the theatre sponsored weekly talent shows for young people, patterned after the famous "Amateur Hour" in Harlem. Along Harden Street, between College Street and Blanding Street, was a previously undocumented cluster of African-American owned or operated businesses, like the Carver Theatre, that catered to the residents of Waverly and the students at the historically African American Benedict College and Allen University.

The owners of the Carver

Theatre plan to preserve this property as an important landmark of African-American history in Columbia and return it to its original use as a movie theater. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 17, 2003.

***The Field Matron's Cottage at the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony***

Mella Rothwell Harmon  
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The Field Matron's Cottage at the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, Reno, Nevada, was listed in the National Register on May 16, 2003. The cottage was recognized for its association with the early history of the colony and the Federal Government programs that were established to address the needs of the local Native American population. The cottage, which is the oldest extant building at the colony, is also significant for its architecture.

The Field Matron's Cottage was built in 1927 to house the activities of the field matron. She served under a program of the Bureau of Indian Affairs that sought to provide instruction in sanitation and hygiene, emergency nursing services, and the prescription of medicine for minor illnesses. Following an unflattering report by the Red Cross, the field matron program was ultimately eliminated, and health care was placed under the purview of the Indian Health Service.

The contemporary population of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony was around 160 people. In 1916 an Act of Congress established the colony, a term for tribes unique to Nevada. The Federal Government was slow to respond to the needs of the Washoes and Northern Paiutes, who were forced to build the best homes they could with limited resources. It took nearly ten years of pleading by the agency superintendent to finally get the funds to build the Field

Matron's Cottage. Over the years, the cottage served the field matron and later the public health nurse, who maintained a small morgue in the basement. Today, the cottage houses the Tribal Police station.

The Field Matron's Cottage is modest in size and stylistically reflects the principles of the Arts and Crafts movement, which fostered a back-to-nature ethos and stressed individual craftsmanship over machine-made products. The architectural style of the cottage is classified as Stewart Vernacular, which is a localized style developed by Frederick Snyder, the superintendent of the Stewart Indian School, in Carson City, Nevada from 1919 to 1934. Snyder made a conscious (and successful) effort to establish an architectural identity for the school. Snyder's apprentices constructed a number of buildings off-campus, particularly at Lake Tahoe. The Field Matron's Cottage is the only known example in Reno.

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*(Top) The Carver Theatre was part of the African-American business community in Columbia, SC. Photo courtesy of Willie J. Moody.*

*(Bottom) Today, the Field Matron's Cottage at the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony in Reno, NV serves the Tribal Police. Photo courtesy by Mella Rothwell Harmon.*

